

**Improving Mobility and Accessibility in the
Charlottesville, North Albemarle, and Greene County Areas**
*September 15, 2010 – **DRAFT OUTLINE***

Purpose

At its December 17, 2009 meeting, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) accepted the Route 29 Corridor Study, but also directed, VDOT and DRPT to work with a Board Subcommittee to develop:

A plan to improve mobility and accessibility north of Charlottesville, evaluating various alternatives, and not limited to prior proposals.

How to resolve the Route 29 traffic congestion in the Charlottesville area has been an ongoing issue for nearly 30 years. Getting agreement on transportation solutions to relieve the congestion will be a difficult task. However, reaching consensus on any solution must begin with discussions between the local leaders. This is an outline for an approach to initiating the discussions between local leaders.

Steps to Develop a Plan for the Route 29 Corridor in the Charlottesville Area

The next steps in the process of developing a mobility and accessibility plan for the Charlottesville area include cross-jurisdictional discussions of local concerns in the Corridor, and identifying opportunities or common ground for consensus. The suggested next steps are as follows:

Step 1: Retain a professional facilitator, with expertise in public sector dispute resolution, to oversee and lead the meeting and cross-jurisdictional discussions. The professional facilitator must be from outside the region (possibly from Virginia Tech, George Mason University or some other leadership institution) in order to ensure neutrality.

Step 2: Develop discussion support information including an outline of facts about the Corridor. The support information may include a chronology of the events and decisions that have occurred over the pasts 20+ years as well as the current plans for the Corridor. The outline of facts should include summary text as well as tables, maps, drawings, and photographs that highlight the characteristics of the corridor. Some of the background information that might be used is included in the Appendix to this document starting on page 3.

Step 3: The facilitator will plan two regional workshop meetings: one with the elected leaders of the Charlottesville area and one with the elected leaders from the Lynchburg and Danville areas.

The Secretary of Transportation, with help from the facilitator and members of the Route 29 CTB Subcommittee, will identify participants for each of the regional workshops. In

the Charlottesville area, local leaders and elected officials from Charlottesville, Albemarle, Nelson and Greene Counties, and the University of Virginia should be invited. In the Lynchburg area, local leaders from Lynchburg and Danville, and the counties of Pittsylvania, Campbell, and Amherst and others as may be determined at the time the meeting is scheduled. The facilitator will develop an agenda for each of these regional workshops to help guide the discussion of Corridor transportation issues. Participation from each of these key entities is crucial, so care must be taken to ensure that those who are invited are able and willing to fully participate in the process.

This first workshops, which will be conducted by the professional facilitator, will serve as a “pre-charrette” with the purpose of putting key issues on the table, and developing a group outlook so that participants feel like they are both part of the process and generally agree that they want to do something with the results of the process. Other items for discussion should include considering and listing potential outcomes of the process, and reviewing issues and concerns at the broad level.

One of the key tasks for this first workshop is to identify a wider group of participants for the primary workshop or charrette (described in Step 4 below). It is anticipated that this next level of participants will include selected members of other jurisdictions along the Corridor and two or three key members of the General Assembly, the MPO, transit agencies, and other stakeholders such as the Chambers of Commerce, other business associations, and civic associations.

The goal of identifying the next, wider level of participants will be to ensure that a diversity of points of view is represented, and that those who have particularly strong stakes with respect to various outcomes are part of the process.

Step 4: Hold a joint workshop, a charrette, with representatives from the Lynchburg area and the Charlottesville area. This workshop will also to be conducted by the professional facilitator. The second workshop agenda should include a review of the issues raised at the first workshop, as well as a facilitated process whereby new ideas can be developed and explored. The outcome of this second workshop should be the identification and molding of potential solutions and new ideas and approaches into outcomes that have cross-jurisdictional support. It is important to allow for the possibility that a follow-on sessions may be needed to further develop and engender consensus.

Step 5: Summarize the areas of consensus and potential solutions and document these outcomes in the final Route 29 Corridor Study report. These potential solutions should then be incorporated in a Corridor Master Plan, the local Comprehensive Plans and the MPO Transportation Plans.

Appendix:

Regional Issues and Chronology for Route 29 in the Charlottesville, Albemarle, and Greene Areas

The absolute importance of Route 29 to the communities through which it passes is clearly evident from the discussions that have taken place over many decades, as well as the passions that these discussions have engendered. The intertwined issues of high growth and congestion and safety have centered most pointedly in the areas on the north side of the City of Charlottesville and extending into Greene County. The discussion below summarizes some of the background with respect to key issues, planning efforts, and a general chronology of events.

One of the key items that must be considered in this portion of the corridor is that the Charlottesville area lies within the planning area designated as the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). In designated MPO areas, the CTB must work cooperatively with the localities and the MPO to formulate transportation plans. Since the MPO has worked continuously over the years to evaluate alternatives and develop transportation recommendations along the Route 29 Corridor, many of which are still valid, it is important to recognize those recommendations in any new plan that is developed. The first step in this effort would be to document the facts about key transportation issues in the region to provide the foundation for informed discussions. This document is intended to serve as an outline for compiling the transportation information for cross-jurisdictional discussions.

The information is provided in four key areas:

1. A summary of the planning work that has been accomplished jointly by VDOT, DRPT, Albemarle and Greene Counties, the city of Charlottesville, and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
2. A listing of transportation improvements in and near the Route 29 Corridor that have already been agreed upon by the local governments.
3. A summary of the evaluations of the Route 29 Corridor Study.
4. Identification of areas along the Route 29 Corridor where additional capacity is needed to accommodate existing and future travel demands.

Section 1. Summary of Previous Studies on Route 29

Over the years, various studies have concluded with recommendations on the US Route 29 corridor or portions of it. In 1990, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) adopted a resolution calling for a three-phase sequence of improvements to the US Route 29 corridor. Phase one improvements were made which included the widening of US Route 29 from Hydraulic Road to the South Fork of the Rivanna River. The second phase improvements called for the construction of grade separated intersections along US Route 29 at the Hydraulic Road, Greenbrier Drive, and Rio Road Intersections. Slated for the

third-phase of improvements was the Western Bypass, contingent on traffic and economic conditions.

Note: Section 1 will provide the sequence of events and plan approvals over the past twenty years to show how the transportation plan evolved to its' current status.

Section 2. Transportation Improvements That Have Been Agreed Upon by Local Governments

While there have been numerous studies performed for the section of Route 29 through Charlottesville and Albemarle and Greene Counties, official agreement across the region for any project is reflected in those projects that are incorporated in to the MPO's Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (called *UnJAM 2035*). *UnJAM 2035* was officially approved by the MPO Policy Board in May 2009.

Note: Section 2 will include Table 2: Summary of Transportation Projects from UnJAM 2035.

Section 3. Summary of Route 29 Corridor Study Evaluations

The primary emphasis of the Route 29 Corridor Study was to identify transportation needs and those aspects of the corridor that should be preserved through transportation and land use planning initiatives, develop an overall planning framework, and identify projects (based on previous studies and/or stakeholder input), and to gain public input for each of these activities.

Within the Charlottesville/Albemarle/Greene County area, the study incorporated projects from previous planning efforts including the most recent of the studies, Places29 and the Greene County Route 33 Multimodal Corridor Study.

*Note: Section 3 will outline the proposals that were evaluated as part of the **Route 29 Corridor Study**.*

Section 4. Areas on Route 29 Where Additional Capacity is Needed to Accommodate Existing and Future Travel Demands

Analysis of existing and projected traffic volumes, levels of congestion, as well as crash data, provides an initial reading of areas in the corridor where additional capacity should be considered. The table on the pages following highlights these locations for the entire 219-mile corridor.